

Internship Pays Off

Students gain valuable hands-on experience and the possibility of an after-graduation hire while employers get motivated short-term help and the opportunity to identify and attract valuable employees.

When they function as they are meant to, internship programs constitute a win-win situation. Yet many companies that might benefit shy away from instituting one because they aren't sure how to use them, how to manage them, or even how to go about setting one up. Ann Landers once wrote, "Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognize them." With a little bit of planning and, yes, some hard work, an internship program can provide myriad opportunities for both employers and interns.

One local company that has had a successful internship program for nearly two decades is Central Hudson. The company recruits an average of 20 interns per year, local students home for summer break as well as students from outside the area (who stay in housing provided at Marist College.) The program's goals are to provide real-world work experience and the opportunity for students to use their skill sets to help with ongoing utility projects while providing Central Hudson with a valuable method for recruiting qualified candidates. Over the last seven years, 20 former interns have accepted job offers with Central Hudson after graduation.

Many companies don't have the history or resources of Central Hudson and, for them, starting an internship program from scratch can appear daunting. Nevertheless, Laurie DelBalzo, an HR Generalist at Dunmore Corp. in Brewster—inspired by her own college-age children—arranged for her firm to take on college interns during the summer. "The benefits of an intern program outweigh the work of organizing the program. We were able to complete specific projects with minimal investment," DelBalzo explains. This is the second year Dunmore has hosted interns and she hopes to continue and expand the program in the future.

As interns, college students are able to gain valuable work experience, whether or not the internship is in their intended field. Troy Dean, who will be a sophomore studying mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan this fall, spent his summer doing industrial engineering work at Dunmore. "My project was implementing a 5S initiative. I set up tool boards, some labeling and moving items. I decided what needed to be purchased to organize and streamline the workspace," said Dean. "That is



something a future employer will see and hopefully be impressed with. I also was able to get hands-on experience which will help with building projects as a mechanical engineer."

Cora Butler, a junior at the University of Pennsylvania, is an architecture major but interned in the product management department at Selux. "This experience, while not in my intended field, has given me insight about the lighting industry, which would be a specialty area for me as an architect. Selux also works with several architects and I can see the interactions from both sides now because of this experience."

Wilkes University senior, Jamie Seyler, found her internship at Selux Corporation in Highland to be "an eye-opener and an amazing experience. It is a great feeling when you can find what you want to do with your life and it gets you really excited."

At Schatz Bearing Company, Mark Strothenke, a senior at Keene State College, was able to perform a variety of tasks to get a better feel for his intended career in product design. “Schatz allowed me to choose what type of work I wanted to do, based on what would help me the most in my senior year of college. They accommodated my needs to the point that if I wanted to learn how to do CNC they would pair me up with whoever knew most on the topic,” explained Strothenke. “The most exciting part of my internship was when they gave me the opportunity to research 3D printers. Schatz even allowed me to write the PO and order the printer that I thought would best suit the company. From there, they allowed me to make 3D designs on the computer and calibrate the printer. It is a complex skill that very few people get the opportunity to learn. This experience was invaluable.”

Some internship programs are ongoing. The Hudson Valley Technology Development Center (HVTDC), for example, consistently employs several interns from The SUNY New Paltz School of Engineering. These students typically help in the design of circuit boards and electronic components or work with 3D printing and prototyping for HVTDC’s client base of local firms. Last spring Ed Winiarski, President of EAW Electronic Systems, Inc. — a Poughkeepsie design, engineering, and contract manufacturer of electronic and electro-mechanical assemblies — contacted HVTDC for assistance on a project to design an innovative building automation system. HVTDC provided the company with three senior engineering interns from SUNY New Paltz who contributed to work on communication protocols. The resulting product was a great success. It took considerable coordination on the part of EAW, HVTDC and SUNY New Paltz to create an internship opportunity like this for the students, but it was well worth the effort.

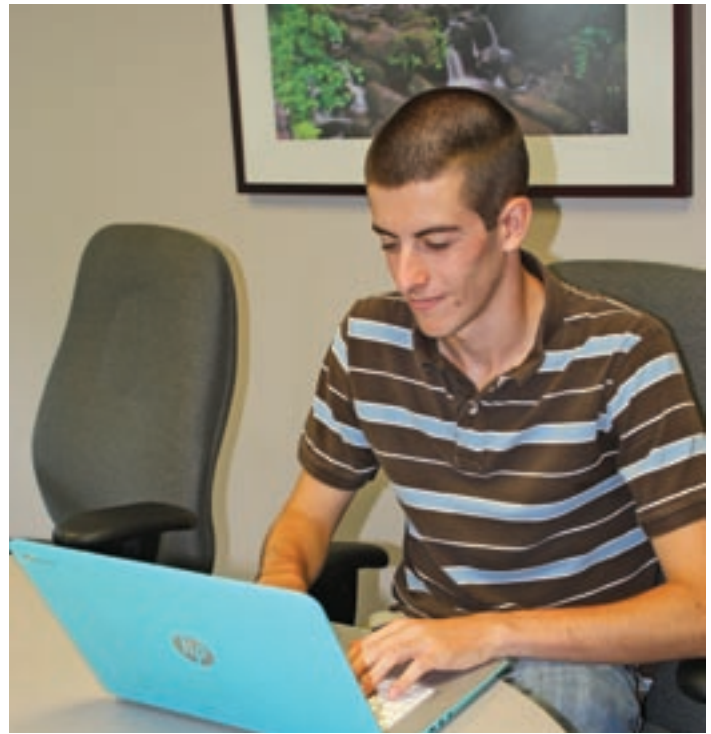
Occasionally the internship experience will change a student’s focus and direct him or her into an unexpected career area. Adam Podpora, a former electrical engineering intern at Central Hudson, now works for the company full-time as an Operations Services Engineer. Podpora interned at Central Hudson for two summers. His first summer included visiting sub-stations and using a thermal camera to survey equipment for possible issues and this led to an interest in high-voltage electrical engineering. “High-voltage isn’t a subject covered in class, so without my internship I really wouldn’t have been exposed to it. I was glad that I had this experience because I realized this was the area I really wanted to work in.” Podpora now supervises interns in this field for the company each summer.

Creating a successful internship program does require work, both on the part of the company and the intern. According to Christine Daly, Career Counselor at SUNY New Paltz, “The key to a successful internship is to provide a challenging and productive work assignment for the intern.”

This is something Central Hudson does very well. John Maserjian, Media Relations Director at Central Hudson, explains, “Each supervisor provides a detailed and meaningful work assignment. The students must provide a 10-minute presentation, at the end of their internship, to supervisors and upper-management about their summer projects.”

Both Dunmore and Selux hired interns for the Human Resource department to help get files and paperwork updated. Katie Huott, a sophomore this fall at Siena College, was a huge asset to HR with her tech-savvy and work ethic. As her supervisor, DelBalzo said, “I was able to give her a project and she was able to just roll with it.”

At Selux, HR Manager Ellen Anderson set Wilkes University senior, Jamie Seyler, the task of thoroughly updating personnel files. Seyler wants to pursue a career in Human Resources and said, “This internship was really an eye-opener and an amazing experience. It is a great feeling when you can find what you want to do with your life and it gets you really excited.”



Troy Dean, a sophomore in mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan spent his summer internship implementing a 5S initiative at Dunmore Corp. in Brewster. “I set up tool boards, some labeling and moving items. I decided what needed to be purchased to organize and streamline the workspace.”

At Dunmore, DelBalzo knew that certain projects, like the 5S initiative, would be just right for an intern and she knew that picking the right intern for the job was important as well. She recommends that companies interview candidates for internship to see if they have a willingness to work, will take initiative and enjoy staying busy.

There are many ways to advertise an internship program, such as using social media (posting on Facebook or Twitter) or word of mouth. The Council of Industry posted resumes from several local students who wanted internships close to home this summer. Next year we hope to expand this service and make more matches between Hudson Valley students and potential employers.

Central Hudson has an established program and a page on their website where interested students can apply. Maserjian said, “We attend college fairs at Clarkson, Manhattan College, RPI, Binghamton, RIT, WPI, SUNY Maritime, SUNY New Paltz, Marist and Mount Saint Mary College. We receive more than 500 resumes on line, many of which come from students attending other colleges, as well.” The local community colleges encourage their students to apply to Central Hudson; Podpora, for example, first heard about the program from a professor at SUNY Dutchess.

While the experience and knowledge gained during an internship is invaluable, most companies also pay their interns. In fact, in New York State, unless the student is earning college credit hours for the work being done and the internship meet six sets of criteria, companies are required to pay interns. Wage requirements for interns working at for-profit businesses can be found at <https://www.labor.ny.gov/formsdocs/factsheets/pdfs/p725.pdf>. Paid internships tend to broaden the field of applicants, as many students need to earn money for college expenses over the summer.

At some schools, students may receive credit hours for internships that incorporate certain elements and are approved by the college. Alyson

Internship: The View from SUNY New Paltz



Interns can be a dynamic and profitable addition to your organization. Not only are most interns highly motivated and quick learners, they can also breathe new life into a company in the form of fresh ideas and familiarity with the latest business trends. The key to a successful internship is to provide a challenging and productive work assignment for the intern.

What is a business internship?

It is a supervised, career related, work experience—with an intentional academic component—for undergraduate and graduate students.

Benefits to employers:

- The chance to work with serious, skilled, motivated and diverse individuals
- Extra manpower to tackle unique projects that have not been completed
- An opportunity to observe/train potential employees
- A fresh perspective on the latest technology and ideas

What do interns expect from employers?

- To learn as much as possible in a professional workplace environment
- To be included in a variety of tasks that complement their classroom learning
- To be treated with respect and to have the opportunity to make professional contacts

An employer's guide to successful internships

Here are the steps that we recommend to build a successful internship program:

1. Appoint an internship coordinator or mentor.
Choose someone within your company who will have the time and leadership skills to implement the internship program.
2. Identify your company's internal needs.
 - What day-to-day or ongoing tasks take place in my company?
 - What is the workload of my staff? How many hours a week should an intern be scheduled?

- What projects are currently on hold due to lack of manpower?
3. Take stock of your resources.

Consider the time, financial and material resources needed to be allocated before hiring an intern.

4. Write a job description; develop clear, daily tasks for the intern.
 - A detailed job description can enhance your chances of getting the most qualified candidates to apply for your position. Job descriptions should include:

- Company information (name, short description, website)
- Primary responsibilities of the intern (major projects, regular and back-up activities)
- Internship logistics (length of internship, time schedule, payment and/or other benefits)
- Application process (required skills and experience, application materials, submission deadlines, and contact information)

5. Share information about your internship search for students and be found

- Contact local colleges and universities
- Send info about the internship to The Council of Industry

6. Plan an internship orientation; determine a schedule with a start and end date.

7. Develop a learning contract with the student that specifies both the expectations of the supervisor and of the student, including measurable learning objectives.

This will provide clear direction for both the supervisor and the intern and serves as a communication tool throughout the internship.

8. Provide ongoing feedback and a final evaluation.

Interns require constructive feedback that will enhance their skills. Written evaluations are expected at the mid-term and at the end of the internship. Evaluation forms are provided by the School of Business.

Now that you have a good idea of what makes up a successful internship, you're ready to experience the tremendous opportunities interns can bring to your company!

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Cora Butler, an architecture major at the University of Pennsylvania, interned in product management at Selux. “I never realized an international company of this size was here in Highland,” she says. “I thought I would have to go into the city to get an experience like this.”

them without too much trouble. Laurie Blake, at Selux, emphasized, “It’s important to have a specific plan. These students are here because they want a challenge. It is important to have a specific person that oversees the intern. Someone who can explain procedures or whom they can go to with questions. Overall though, businesses are able to get assistance in completing projects when they may otherwise be shorthanded.”

“Internships are a valuable resource when used correctly,” explained Plant Manager Robert Lanser at Schatz Bearing Corp. “The interns have somewhat of a knowledge base when they start, and can help with or complete ongoing projects pretty much from day one.”

Internships allow students to get a sense of what the company culture is like and to consider how they might fit in. Central Hudson encourages students from beyond the Hudson Valley to not only experience working in the electrical utility field, but to explore what living in this area has to offer. Company-sponsored events bring interns and employees into contact and extend the exposure to the company culture.

For some students, an internship serves as confirmation that they are on the right career path. Strothenke said, “This was my first big test to see if what I am going to school for is actually what I want to do. I got out into the “real world” and outside of my comfort zone, working with all types of people of all different ages; it was greatly helpful for me in understanding the work environment. And happily, I believe it truly is my calling for.”

In fact, it was because of his HVTDC internship at EAW that SUNY New Paltz senior Mike Papesca changed career direction. He decided to pursue a master’s degree in computer science after completing his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering. The programming he did during the internship introduced him to a field that he truly enjoyed

Weisner, a student at Clarkson University, was able to receive credit for a summer internship at FALA Technologies based on a report provided by FALA President Frank Falatyn that detailed her responsibilities and the abilities she demonstrated in accomplishing the tasks set before her.

Companies are often able to brainstorm a list of projects for interns and set up a structure for



and inspired him to continue his education at SUNY New Paltz and interning for HVTDC.

Internship programs can benefit both company and student by acting as a long-term “interview for employment.” After spending several months at a company, it is not unusual for an intern to receive an offer of employment following graduation. Such was the case for the two other SUNY New Paltz interns at EAW; Adam Secovnic and RJ Pisani have joined EAW on a full-time basis as electrical engineers. They will be responsible for the continued development of the project they began as interns.

At Central Hudson, the internship program has been a great resource for attracting new employees. Podpora, for example, was able to explore electrical engineering, an area he would not otherwise have been exposed to, and discovered a company where he felt he fit in well. He did a second internship at Central Hudson after his junior year at RPI and was offered a position at the company by December of his senior year. “That was a great feeling. It really took the pressure off to know I had a job where I would enjoy working once I graduated.”

It is really the manufacturing community that benefits the most from internships. These opportunities allow students from local colleges to see that there is a place for them in the Hudson Valley after graduation. It also shows local students that go to school outside the area that they can find challenging and remunerative positions back home. The Hudson Valley has many homegrown young people with tremendous talents and abilities, and the colleges and universities here attract many more. It is important that manufacturers let them know there are opportunities here in the valley.

The companies discussed in this article all plan to run an internship program again next year and all would like to increase the number of interns participating. Opportunities abound for those not afraid of a little hard work.

Adam Podpora (right), a former electrical engineering intern at Central Hudson, now works for the company full-time. Along with fellow Dutchess Community College graduates (Michael Campagna and Joseph Kisch) he utilized Central Hudson’s Matching Gift Program to create the Young Engineers Scholarship, awarded to a graduate of DCC receiving an associate’s degree in engineering. The first recipient was Mark Toujline.

Internship programs at Hudson Valley colleges

Bard College

www.bgia.bard.edu/internships/
646-839-9262

Marist College

www.marist.edu/management/internship.html
845-575-3225

Mount St. Mary College

www.msmc.edu/Student_Services/Career_Center/Internships__Coops.be
845-569-3175

Pace University

www.pace.edu/career-services/internships
866-722-3338

SUNY Dutchess Community College

www.sunydutchess.edu/campuscommunity/internships.htm
845-431-8000

SUNY New Paltz

www.newpaltz.edu/careers/internships.html
845-257-3265

SUNY Orange Community College

www.sunyorange.edu/business/internships.shtml
845-341-4411

SUNY Rockland Community College

www.sunyrockland.edu/campus-life/services/career/internships?utm_source=go-internships&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=internships
845-574-4216

SUNY Sullivan County Community College

www.sunysullivan.edu/transferservices/
845-434-5750

SUNY Ulster County Community College

www.sunyulster.edu/academics/achieve_more/index.php
845-687-5192

SUNY Westchester

www.sunywc.edu/news/ce-astorino-and-odell-launch-online-internship-portal
914-606-6600

The Culinary Institute of America

www.culinary.imodules.com/s/898/csInt.aspx?sid=898&gid=1&pgid=707&cid=1914&post_id=0
845-451-1275

Vassar College

www.careers.vassar.edu/internships-jobs/internships
845-437-5285



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